

CHINATOWN/LEATHER DISTRICT CENTRAL ARTERY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**MEETING SUMMARY – PARCEL 24, MEETING #8, March 1, 2004
ST. JAMES CHURCH, 125 HARRISON AVE., CHINATOWN**

Stephanie Fan, Co-chair of the Chinatown/ Leather District Central Artery Advisory Committee, welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. She gave a summary of the South Bay Planning Study Charrette, which occurred on Saturday, February 28th regarding Parcels 25 - 27A. Generally, the people were not averse to the idea of height and actually proposed some of the tallest buildings to be in the South Bay area. Out of the seven different groups, most included designs with housing in Parcel 24 and a positive, strong connection to the rest of the Study Area with additional housing. There were ideas around having pedestrian bridges or other physical connections within the South Bay area as well as over to Parcel 24. Other observations from the charrette included more height around Parcel 27A with lower heights on Kneeland Street, and public facilities - community space, library, open space, and housing with ground floor local retail. Fan commented that the open space in the middle of Parcel 24 would help connect the parcel and the South Bay area to Chinatown and the Leather District.

Fan then went on to review highlights from the previous (1/26/04) meeting. There will be additions to the Site Description section that includes historic context. Sue Kim, BRA, stated that newsletters from the Chinese Historical Society were being reviewed for more information and the redraft was in progress. Fan restated issues and questions about parking from the prior meeting, including a comment regarding insufficient parking for commercial uses having an adverse impact on local businesses. Also, if there is too much parking for residential uses, the market for those units could change (more expensive units). Fan introduced Ralph DeNisco, BTD, who explained that parking ratios are broken down by neighborhood and by use. In Chinatown, the ratio is 0.5 - 1.0 spaces per residential unit, and the goal is to provide sufficient parking, while not changing the intended market. The ratios at Kensington and Liberty Place are 0.75 spaces/ unit, but he says there are a lot of factors to consider such as size of units, number of family units (tend to need more spaces), levels of affordability, and the rental / ownership mix. DeNisco went through several properties in Chinatown and their parking ratios. Fan asked DeNisco about the idea of narrowing the street width on Hudson St. so as to curb illegal parking on the east side of the street. DeNisco responded that the overarching criteria for street width is emergency access, and the Fire Department requests a minimum of 18 feet of clear space. When people try to park partially on the curb, it is still illegal. It might be possible to widen the sidewalk about one or two feet, but that's about it.

Fan introduced Yan Gao, BRA, to further describe section drawings that were discussed at the previous meeting that demonstrate different height scenarios at the southern end of the site. There was general consensus that height along Kneeland St. be approximately the same as 75 Kneeland St. (approximately 155'-160'). However, there was still some question about how the ramp on the Albany St. side will affect the height and design on south of the suggested open space. Gao showed different height/massing scenarios for that portion of the site including the existing buildings on the other side of Hudson St. to illustrate a question about height from the previous meeting. A three-story building on the southern end of the site will abut the new Albany St./ ramp so that it wouldn't be as functional as a five-story structure that would allow natural light into the units.

Questions & Answers:

- Will there be a sidewalk on Albany south of the possible open space? (Bill Tuttle, MTA: No real sidewalk is planned south of the middle of the site because there isn't a place to connect it to.)
- What are the parking ratios for existing housing developments in Chinatown? (Bruce Ehrlich, BRA: From surveys, the ratio probably ranges from just under 0.5 to over 0.9 spaces/ unit. See *attachment*.)
- What is the difference between subsidies? (Ehrlich: Affordable rental units generally need external subsidies with income limits, and affordable ownership units generally require a development to have internal subsidies.)
- How many years do the housing subsidies last? (Ehrlich answers that generally, state and federal subsidies are 50 years or in perpetuity, or sometimes renewals, but it really does vary by development and program.)

Fan turned the meeting over to Bruce Ehrlich, BRA, to start the discussion around affordability. Ehrlich explained some exercises that would hopefully lead to a stronger sense of preference and importance regarding size, ownership, and income levels for housing. He presented several tables with several options and asked participants to place stickers on the choices they felt more strongly about. Please note that the following numbers and percentages are estimates and would vary according to project.

- 1) Type of housing: affordable rental, affordable owner, market-rate rental or market-rate owner. Select the importance level of each type: not important, somewhat important, or very important.
Participants felt affordable rental and affordable ownership opportunities were very important.
- 2) Unit size: Larger units cost more to build and subsidize and also mean fewer smaller units. For example, three 3BR units equals five 1BR or four 2BR units.
Select importance of 3BR units: not important, somewhat important, or very important.
Select percentage of 3BR units: 10-20%, 20-30%, or 30-40%.
Participants strongly felt that 3BR were very important. The percentage level was split, ~ approximately 30% to be 3BR.
- 3) Income level: (Example for Family of 3) Very low income is 30% AMI (Area Median Income) – approximately \$22,000 or \$560 monthly rent. Moderate income is 80% AMI – approximately \$60,000 or \$1500 in monthly rent. There is an approximate 2:1 trade off for having very low income vs. moderate income – one Very Low-Income Unit (\$240,000 subsidy) = two Moderate Income Units (\$120,000 subsidy per unit).
Select importance of very low-income units: not important, somewhat important, or very important.
Select percentage of very low-income units: 5-10%, 10-20%, or 20-30%.
Participants indicated that Very Low-Income units were very important. The percentage level was split, approximately 20-30% range, with some indicating more.
- 4) Affordable Community Space or Housing? Approximately 15,000 SF of subsidized community space equals 10 affordable units.
Select importance of community space: not important, somewhat important, or very important.
Select percentage of community space: Less than 5,000 SF, 5,000-10,000 SF, or 10,000-15,000 SF.
Participants indicated that community space was very important, and in the 5,000-10,000SF range.
- 5) Distribution- what is the appropriate distribution of 1, 2, and 3BR units?
Select percentage of 1, 2, & 3BR units: 10-20%, 20-30%, 30-40%, or 40-50%
Participants indicated between 20-30% and 30-40% for all sizes – a roughly equal mix of 1, 2, & 3BRs.

Questions & Comments:

- What is the income limit difference between affordable rental and affordable ownership? (Ehrlich: Affordable rental is on average 60% AMI, while affordable ownership is 80-120% AMI on average.)
- If unit sizes are bigger, will students will move in? Can subsidies control students? (Ehrlich: Subsidies can not discriminate, they are decided by household level income. Subsidized units must be applied for as a household. Management companies can make preferences for tenants.)
- Another way to control against renting to too many students is to not have rotating leases.
- In the larger picture, more 3BR units require more of a project's the subsidy, thereby leaving less money for very low income. Is this achievable? (Ehrlich: Once we can try to put all the preferences together into a scenario, we will have to reformulate this for feasibility.)
- Does having more very low-income families (in 3 BR units) jeopardize other city services? (Ehrlich: No, because for every 3 BR unit, there are several fewer very low-income 1's and 2's.)
- Does the City do capital budgets for city services by neighborhood? (Ehrlich: Probably not.)
- How does affordable ownership fit into the conversation? (Ehrlich: The options shown didn't go higher than 20-30% because the result would be very few affordable ownership units.)
- Are we excluding SRO, senior housing, assisted living, etc? (Ehrlich: No but we're just trying to see what the basic preferences are.)
- To achieve affordable rentals it is very important to have market-rate ownership to create the internal subsidy for affordable units.
- How does parking fit in with the economics? (Ehrlich: The only residential component that absolutely needs parking is market rate ownership units as they will most likely have a car and not be willing to

buy a unit without a parking spot. Parking is very expensive, approximately \$30,000-50,000 per space to build, and there is no subsidy for that.)

- We should think about whether we are building for the past/ existing market or for the future. Many families may assume there are no family units in Chinatown, so they give up looking. Can we get accurate info around waiting list numbers? (Ehrlich: The information provided at previous meetings is recent, and it would be very important to see what the demand has been for the Metropolitan.)

Fan concludes the meeting and invites the Hudson Street Coalition to present anything they have been working on at the next meeting, which will be in April – to be advertised.